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THE JOURNAL is published weekly by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, IL 60610. Phone 751-6000 (Area Code 312). Cable address "Medic" Chicago.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE—The subscription price per year for members of the AMA is \$2, included in the annual membership dues. The subscription price per year for nonmembers is \$30 in the United States and US possessions; \$50 in all other countries, payable in advance. Price to medical students, interns, and residents, \$10 in the United States and US possessions.

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The Cover

(Daniel) Ridgway Knight (1840-1924) was born in Philadelphia, and by the time he died in Paris at the age of 83, he had become one of the most famous and emulated pastoral painters of the 19th century. He was almost an exact contemporary of Claude Monet, who died in Giverny in 1926 at the age of 86. Unlike Monet, however, Knight kept to the traditional and won the popular taste, as well as the awards of the critics.

Knight began his formal art training at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, but in 1872 he left for France where he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and later with Meissonier in his studio at Piossy. During these early years he also designed costumes for the theatre.

Characteristic of the dual French-American allegiance he was to maintain throughout his life, Knight exhibited his first works in 1873 at both the Paris Salon and the National Academy of Design in New York. From 1884 on, when he received an honorable mention from the Paris Salon, he was the recipient of numerous medals and honors from France, America, Germany, and Belgium, as well as the grant and medal of honor from his alma mater, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In 1890, the British Post Savings Bank used his painting, *The Year's Economies*, as its New Year's greeting card to all its depositors.

The enormous size of the Knight canvases was typical for that period. They were functional as well as aesthetic, serving as a substitute for heat-losing windows in buildings without the central-heating conveniences of the 20th century. *Landscape in Brittany* (cover) is one of the few Knight canvases that is preserved in its original size. Most of the canvases that passed into private hands unfortunately were cut into sizes more easily displayed in the smaller homes of the 20th century. A few US museums, however, have Knight paintings, including the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Brooklyn Museum, and museums in Boston, Milwaukee, and Omaha.

Knight used his paintings to tell a story, most often about peasant life and the French countryside, a theme much favored in the Paris of the time. His colors are muted, the light is soft, and he poses his peasants in a natural manner. The realistic draping of the clothing is the result of painstaking study of weight and texture, as well as his early experience as a costume designer. Most remarkable, perhaps, is his ability to infuse an otherwise banal scene with the freshness and immediacy of the morning mist.—M. THERESE SOUTHGATE, MD

Landscape in Brittany, 1891. Oil on canvas. 194.3×241.3 cm. Courtesy of H. Chinchinian, MD, Clarkston-Silcott, Washington, DC)

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